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ABSTRACT

From 1912 to 1921, Iowa was the center of national attention as state and local education leaders attempted to implement a new model of rural education. This model was part of the Country Life Movement, whose proponents sought to create a more modern future for farm families, an alternative form of rural community that combined the advantages of city and country. This book analyzes the politics, geography, and social history of rural education reform and its principal policy prescription--rural school consolidation--in Iowa during this period. Resistance to consolidation was particularly virulent in the rural Midwest. Resistance was both place-based and class-based and proceeded in a highly localized manner. In most instances, the socially elite perceived rural resistance to be based on irremediable ignorance or reactionary perniciousness and did not recognize farm people's concerns that consolidation would undermine existing social relations and, therefore, the sustainability of family farming. Part 1 examines the theoretical and historical contexts of rural education reform in the Midwest and Iowa in the early 20th century. Part 2 provides a case study of how the school consolidation movement and local resistance unfolded in a particular place: Delaware County, Iowa, and the town of Buck Creek. An epilogue discusses implications for rural education reform today. An appendix provides demographic statistics for areas supporting and opposing consolidation. (Contains approximately 200 references, an index, and photographs.) (SV)

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